

[P.457-B]

Teklum

682 epidemic (two cases), when people have drunk
[755] a great deal and their motive is fresh in their
[273] mind.

682 The settings in which homicides occur indi-
152 cate that a killer is expressing not his own
154 bravery but rather his fears. Wounds are fre-
[273] quently inflicted from the rear, and often the
victim is outnumbered and set upon by a
group. The victim is sometimes invited to
drink with his killer(s), and in this session he is
disarmed psychologically and physically. Al-
cohol reduces the chance of his effective reac-
tion, and this is important when a knife or
machete is used. Shotgun killings are done at a
distance and do not require this tactic, al-
though it may still be employed. For drinking
serves to reduce the killer's own fears. Drink
"beats the blood" and makes unusual be-
havior possible. One killer, in recounting his
act, was not trying to prove bravery, but
rather his own good judgment and cool-head-
edness. The killer fired at the victim while he
was sleeping, his back turned to the door, and
killed him. The shot also entered the arm of the
sleeping man's wife. She saw the killer as he
left the scene, but testified in court that she
had seen no one. She was, in effect, accepting
his verdict that her husband was a witch. This
homicide was not regarded by the killer or by
anyone else as a heroic act, nor was the killer
in recounting it attempting to emphasize
anything other than the necessity of the act.

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[695]
• [683]

682 Instrumentality: Weapons and Wounds 411

gun	14
machete	6
gun and machete	4
knife	3
knife and gun	1
knife and machete	1
knife and stone	1
hatchet	1
nail	1
sandals	1
??	4

The variety of weapons reduces the question of any technological determinism to a minimum. The actual weapon used seems to be a matter of convenience. When more than one is used, it is usually evidence that the assailant had helpers. The nail is unusual. It was hammered into the jaws of a man who had entered the curing profession at an age considered too young. The attack on the jaws of the victim seems related to the power of speech and to the

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TABLE 1. CASE ANALYSIS OF HOMICIDES OCCURRING FROM 1938 TO 1965
(As Recalled from Memory by Three Informants)*

Case No.	Date	Age	Weapon	Wounds	Place	Time	Suspects	Motive	Outcome
1	1938—fiesta in neighboring town	50	pistol, machete	head cut off	in houseyard of borrowed house in neighboring town	afternoon	?	Accused of witchcraft	No one apprehended.
2	1945	65	pistol	shot between eyes	in street	night	two drinking companions (relatives of victim)	Drunken quarrel	Two companions went to jail. While in jail, with help of witch from neighboring town, set fire to four houses in pueblo.
3	1946	48	machete (brother disarmed him of shotgun)	?	road at outskirts of town, at cross	dawn (5 A.M.)	brothers: 1 older, 2 younger	Curer, suspected of being witch.	One brother went to jail for five years.
4	1946	45	machete	well chopped up	neighboring hamlet	?	?	"I don't know what crime he had. He was a curer."	No one went to jail.
5	1946—fiesta San Francisco	38	machete and gun	well cut up, head and neck	in woods	?	?	Accused of witchcraft.	No one complained.
6	1946	50	shotgun	?	in street	night, after curing ceremony, very drunk	?	Curer, accused of witchcraft.	Wife complained, but no witness.
7	1958	27	naïl	in throat	in street	night, after curing ceremony	father of boy who died of witchcraft	Curer, accused of witchcraft.	Before dying, victim revealed name of killer, but local authorities would not arrest him. Case went to higher court, but no witnesses.
8	1960—11/28	60	machete	cut off head	in street	night, after curing ceremony	son-in-law	Accused of witchcraft by curer at ceremony for daughter.	Son-in-law fled town.
9	1960—12/18 fiesta, Sta. Lucia	28	knife, machete	heart, throat, stomach	?	?	killer paid by cattle owners	Stole cattle.	Released killer on bail of 2,500 pesos paid by cattle owners.

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10	1960-12/18 fiesta, Sta. Lucia	60	shotgun	shot in back- bullet entered lung	homestead, two feet from house	7 P.M., after curing ceremony	brother-in-law	Curer, accused of witchcraft.	No one apprehended.
11	1961-4/16	70	machete	many wounds	near highway	9 P.M., after gathering of curers	neighbors	Curer, accused by other curers of being witch causing epidemic.	Neighbors were not identified.
12	1961	35	shotgun	shot in back	highway	?	leader of political independence movement (wife's brother)	Refused to pay tribute to independence leaders.	Killer's wife (victim's sister) left husband. No one jailed. Later, killer killed by victim's brother (case 18).
13	1961-7/26 fiesta in neighboring hamlet	30	?	?	street, near cantina	late at night	wife's brother	Very abusive, fought drunk.	Wife's brother fled town.
14	1961-10/24 fiesta in neighboring hamlet	45	knife	many wounds	?	?	neighbors	Accused of being witch by neighbors.	No one apprehended.
15	1961-12/15 fiesta, Sta. Lucia	37	gun	?	cantina	late at night	?	Accused of witchcraft.	Wife agreed he was witch.
16	1962-9/25	18	?	?	?	?	rival for girl	Fought over girl.	No one accused.
17	1962-9/25	20	knife	stabs	in street	night (1 A.M.)	cattle owners	Accused of stealing cattle.	Went to jail, but released on bail put up by cattle owners.
18	1962-9/26	35	gun	shot in heart	highway	(4 P.M.)	brother-in-law's brother	Revenge-victim had killed his own brother-in-law (case 17).	Killer declared he had killed. Paid fine and went free.
19	1962-11/15 fiesta, All Saints	20	knife, gun	stabbed in heart and shot	drinking in cantina	late at night	rival for girl	Fought over girl.	No one accused.
20	1962-12/24 fiesta, Christmas Eve	50	gun	shot between eyes	road outside town	dawn (6 A.M.)	leader of cattle association	Accused of stealing cattle.	?
21	1963-4/4	36	hatchet	head	in woods, given drink by killers	5 P.M.	?	Curer, accused of witchcraft.	No one apprehended. Brother did some investigating.
22	1963-7/24	45	?	?	in bed	night, after curing ceremony	Curer from neighboring town	Victim had accused suspect of being a witch when curing a patient.	Nothing.

* Two more homicides were recalled for 1964 than official records show. They most probably occurred in a previous year.

TABLE 1 (Cont.)

Case No.	Date	Age	Weapon	Wounds	Place	Time	Suspects	Motives	Outcome
23	1963-8/26 fiesta, San Augustin	?	sandals	kicked to death	in cantina	afternoon	drinking companions	Barroom brawl	One of two assailants arrested, bailed out.
24	1963-9/25	30	shotgun	forehead	in field	late afternoon	wife of man whom he was accused of having killed by witchcraft	Accused by cures in neighboring towns of having caused sick men	Nothing.
25	1964-1/2 fiesta, New Years	30	machete, gun	?	street outside home of new president	night (11 p.m.)	killer paid by brothers	Accused of stealing cattle.	Brother fled, but was jailed when he returned.
26	1964-3/3 Carnival	14	gun, machete	chopped up with machete	street, one block from home	night (11 p.m.)	?	Accused of witchcraft by neighbors.	No one accused.
27	1964-5/14	80	gun	forehead	highway	afternoon	Lachine liquor distiller, not of community	Victim had denounced distiller to federal authorities.	No one accused.
28	1964-9/1	30	gun		mine, after his brothers gave him drink	afternoon	his brothers	Accused of witchcraft.	One brother fled. The other was jailed but claimed the first one did it.
29	1964-9/14	65	knives	many knife wounds	street, three blocks from home	late at night, after gathering of cures	cures	Cure, accused by other cures of being witch causing epidemic	No one accused.
30	1964	22	?	?	eight meters from his house	night (1 a.m.)	close friend, hired by cattle owners, brothers of killer	Accused of stealing cattle.	Freed on bail.
31	1965-2/14	42	machete	head cut off	road to neighboring hamlet	night (3 a.m.)	?-at first thought it was wood spirit, until they found head	?	No one accused.
32	1965-2/22	45	knife, stone	stabbed in heart, head lashed	street near house	night	?	Accused of witchcraft by neighbors.	No one accused.
33	1965-5/23 Carnival	45	shotgun	?	street	night	?	Accused of witchcraft.	No one accused.

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34	1965 4/24	27	gun	?	found in woods, body dragged there from town	night (1 A.M.)	brother-in-law	He had relations with 14-year-old sister-in- law. When he tried reconciliation, became drunk, abusive.	No witness, no blood found in in-laws' house.
35	1965 - 5/30 fiesta, just before San Francisco	35	shotgun	three shots entered back	road	afternoon	?	Stole cattle, corn.	Killers left note saying old man did it, but no one be- lieved it.
36	1965 8/11	42	machete	head severed, side wounds	road to milpa	6 P.M.	son by first mar- riage	Failed to help son get a wife; accused by dying wife of causing her death by witch- craft.	Widow spread rumors that it was his son, but refused to testify.
37	1965 10/?	30	shotgun	back	in houseyard	6 P.M.	rival for girl	Accident -- killer mis- took him for his brother, who was challenging killer's suit for a girl.	?

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location of the soul, *sc'ulel*, in the tongue, *yal*, wherein lies the particular power of the curer. This possibly suggested the mode of attack.

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The instruments used to kill are carried by the farmers of this area most of the time. The men go to their milpa with a machete strapped to their side, a shotgun slung over their shoulder, and sometimes even a knife tucked in their waistband. They frequently interrupt work to hunt birds, rabbits, and deer. The shotgun does not excite suspicion or comment when it is seen. The men of Teklum are technologically prepared to kill in the course of an ordinary day's work.

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The number of wounds and the thoroughness with which the job is done (see Table 1) suggest not so much the fury of the assailants as the fear motivating their act. In a witch-killing, it appears to be thought necessary to hack up the victim completely so that his power is effectively ended: one witch was cut into 32 pieces; another had 166 wounds.

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The death acts drawn up in the local courthouse have been increasingly specific in their statements as to the wounds inflicted ever since the government's intervention in the case of an accidental death in 1950. The local authorities were threatened with a fine of 600 pesos if the details were not properly recorded. The careful measurement of the body in relation to the road and to neighboring milpas and the measurement of the size and depth of the wounds provide the screen of complicity that wards off further investigation by federal authorities and preserves local independence. There is never any questioning of suspects or attempt to solve the crime by officials. The success of the ploy is illustrated in the following account:

Pedro had animals at the spring and had gone out early with ropes in his bag to lasso them. He was found with a rope tied around his neck hung from a *ikinih* tree. We went out and measured the length and thickness of the rope and how many centimeters it penetrated his neck. We put all these facts in the report, which gave the cause of death as suicide.

At that time we had a schoolteacher in town who asked the dead man's wife why the town didn't investigate who killed him because someone must have done it. He went with the widow to the Ministerio Publico in the capital. Well, when they came out, there were all the facts in the death act. [Informant laughed heartily as he recalled this success.] He saw that we had discovered the body at 3 p.m., that the rope was 15 meters

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long, and that the body was suspended 35 centimeters from the ground. He saw that we had raised the act well, and nothing was done.

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562*Who Kills and Why*

The only universal factor among the killers is sex—only men kill (Table 2). Women do not kill nor are they killed in Teklum. This does not mean that they are not subject to as many tensions or abuses as men, or that these have no channels for expression. Women work through men by agitating them to homicide.

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Sometimes revenge is delayed, for the agents chosen by women may be children who must reach maturity before accomplishing the deed (see case 36, in which the son's animosity toward his father was kindled at his mother's deathbed).

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Neighbors are a significant group in witchcraft killing. (Neighbors may be listed in Table 2 under another relationship, for instance as brother-in-law or as cattle owner.)

They are the informal judges of suspected witches, and it is frequently they who kill a man considered to be a witch. When the curers accuse a man of causing epidemics, his neighbors are usually the executors. For this reason,

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most people try to neutralize the hostility of

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682 their neighbors by establishing *compadrazgo*, or
 683 godparental, relations with them.

684 Ten of the 37 homicides here reported were
 685 committed by immediate consanguineal or
 686 affinal relatives of the victim. The high frequency
 687 of killings involving brothers or
 593 brothers-in-law (8 cases) suggests a locus of
 601 high tension in these relationships. Male
 602 siblings, the *yermanotak*, comprise the closest
 [476] cooperating group. Cooperation between
 brothers is obligatory when wheat is to be
 threshed, a house built, or a roof rethatched. If
 a brother or brother-in-law is unavoidably
 absent, he must pay a substitute. Brothers, or
 sons and fathers, are the only relationship
 pairs who work the milpa in common and share
 the harvest. Bilateral inheritance, with equal
 division of land and house to both male and
 female offspring, means that brothers-in-law
 are potentially equivalent in the competition
 for goods as well as in their obligation to co-
 operate. A man kills his sister's husband if the
 husband is abusive to the woman or to mem-
 bers of the family (two cases). The brother
 figures not only as a lethal opponent, but also
 as the man who avenges one's own death (case
 18, Table 1). When someone has been killed
 for witchcraft, his brothers are expected to ac-
 cept the verdict or to avenge the
 killing.

[Text continues on p. 463-A]

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TABLE 2. SUSPECT, BY MOTIVE FOR HOMICIDE

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	BROTHER- BROTHER IN- LAW	SON	SON- IN- LAW	REL- ATIVE OF NEIGH- BORS	WITCH- CRAFT KILL- ING	CATTLE RIVAL CURERS OWN- ERS	FOR DRUNKEN GIRL	NOT OF COMMU- NITY	??	TOTAL	
• [688] Victim was accused of witchcraft	2	1	1	1	2	2	1	—	—	8	18
Victim accused suspect of witchcraft	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1
[685] Cattle theft	1	—	—	—	—	—	4	—	—	1	6
[578] Rivalry over girl	—	—	—	—	—	—	3	—	—	—	3
Abusive behavior	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2
[579] Drunken quarrel	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	2
[627] Avenge a death (not caused by witchcraft)	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	2
Political conflict	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
??	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	2
Total	3	5	1	1	2	2	1	4	3	2	37

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682 these suspicions and kill the witch. If he should
674 kill the witch while the patient is still alive, it
75 is believed that the patient will die.

682 Killing men for cattle theft (six cases) is a
685 relatively recent occurrence. It has put homi-
674 cide on the market: the associations of
[463] cattle-owners have hired killers in three of the
[697] six cases. In addition to the killer's fee, they
pay the fine to release him from prison. Fines
for homicide have increased in the past five
years—from 1,000 to 3,000 pesos—but not
sufficiently to price the murder of cattle
thieves out of the market. A good bull is worth

[435] 1,500 pesos, and the threat of further loss by
theft seems to justify the expenditure of fees
and fines. When the cattle-owners lose some
685 of their herd, they go to spiritualists or to San
787 Miguel, the talking saint of Ixtapa, to find out
776 who did the stealing. Since such evidence does
not hold up in court, legal settlement is not

685 attempted. Legal action, moreover, would
694 create an enemy who might seek revenge. A
Ladino secretary of the town center who had
lost a bull accused a man of stealing his cattle
and demanded 500 pesos in compensation. By
receiving the money he jeopardized his safety,
and eventually he had to leave town.

The Resolution of the Case

682 It is nearly impossible to find witnesses to
69 homicide. Of these 37 cases, 28 resulted in no
action being taken by the authorities, and in
five cases where the killers went to jail, they
were released with the payment of minimal
fines. In the calculations of the townspeople, it
is hardly worth risking one's neck to get such a
minimal revenge.

682 However, this does not mean that homicide
593 goes unnoticed in the community. After a
626 killing the widow sings of the life of the dead
[683] man. If she is in agreement with the verdict
arrived at by the killer and others, she will
deny knowledge of what he has done, or even
suggest that she too was aware of what harm
he has caused (one widow implied that her
husband, killed as a witch, was responsible for
the death of four of her six children). If she
objects to the verdict, she sings of what a good
man he was and how blameless. She will then
air her own suspicions in the following weeks as
to who killed her husband.

682 Following the funeral, when the women
683 have left the cemetery, the men sit at the
627 grave. As they measure out a liter of liquor and
pass it around, they advance hypotheses as

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682 to who did it. The consultations with curers
 683 prior to the death of the supposed victims of a
 627 witch will be introduced as evidence. (Some
 degree of consensus may have been built up be-
 forehand, in witch-killings, by the public
 broadcast of accusations noted above.) The
 focus of the discussion is not so much on who
 killed the dead man, but whether he was in-
 deed a witch. This kind of mock trial occurs
 after every funeral, since it must be decided
 who caused the sickness. Emotions run very
 high as the liquor is passed around, and accusa-
 tions are made, sometimes against those pres-
 ent. It was after a funeral that one man killed
 his son (not included in Table 1) for accusing
 him of having caused the death of the son's
 child, who was being buried.

682 In the weeks following a homicide, it is dis-
 627 cussed at all the drinking sessions in the homes
 or in the town hall. Eventually an authorita-
 tive version begins to emerge. Those who have
 defended the victim then keep silent, and the
 affair "rests in peace." Avenging the death of a
 man judged to have been a witch, so far as I
 know, has never been done. In one case (no. 36,
 Table 1) the widow of a man killed as a witch
 vigorously denied the legitimacy of the act and
 built up a case against the killer. She spread
 word that it was without doubt the dead man's
 son by a prior marriage. When the son was
 killed shortly after (case 37, Table 1), everyone
 assumed that he had been killed by the
 widow's son by her prior marriage. However,
 the authoritative version concerning the
 second killing was that it was an accident: he
 had been mistaken for his brother, whom the
 killer was after because of rivalry over a girl.

682 Rules for Surviving

183 The patterning of the selection of victims
 and the circumstances of homicide provide the
 basis for formulating a set of rules that can
 ensure survival. The long-range rules of sur-
 vival, in the words of an elder at the occasion of
 the death of his godchild, are:

682 *lekon hak'o la kuenta me'tal*
 539 I pay respect to my elders.
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[601] *hun ku kihts'in kalničan*
 I greet my younger brothers and my children
 (classificatory extension of kinship terms).

spisil hak' la kuenta
 To all I give respect.

ha? hil lekodik. Ma taltik mila' ma taltik čomal

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as with the cattle industry, is a covert cause for personal attacks on other grounds.

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A third enterprise, trucking, has caused a realignment of political interests in factions associated with two truck-owning cooperatives. Membership in one of the cooperatives, or patronage of one of the two trucks, arouses the enmity of members of the other cooperative. Several threats have been made on the lives of the owners and the operators, but the only damage done has been to tires.

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The tensions resulting from the introduction of these new enterprises cannot be fully measured by the deaths attributed to direct economic conflict. Wealth differences resulting from the new enterprises excite envy, and with it come accusations of witchcraft. In this community, witchcraft killing does not perform the normative function of reducing wealth differentiation that Kluckhohn saw operating among the Navaho (1944), since it is the poor man who is killed as a witch, not the rich man. The slaying of the envious witch exacerbates the economic differentiation that provides the seedbed for conflict.

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Another new source of tension is found in the growing demand for political leadership or even independence from the township by the ejido colonies formed since land reform went into effect in 1937. The inept maneuvers of two founders of the ejido colonies in hot country resulted in two homicides (cases 12 and 18 in Table 1).⁴ The increasing strength of these hamlets will mean that more attempts will be made in the future to gain political equality and/or independence. Whether this will result in increasing homicides will depend on social-control agencies external to the Indian communities.

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Homicide occurring as a direct result of economic and political competition represents a new strategy in the community. The decision to kill rather than to use other negative sanctions is related to the social-control mechanisms discussed below.

Changing Mechanisms of Social Control

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A system of social control rests not only on the exercise of negative sanctions, but on the sense of personal security derived from confidence in the institutions of control. In Teklum, the maintenance of control was formerly centered in the guardianship against malevolent spirits held by the ancestor spirits and the curers. The "police force," made up of ten

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178 the cave and that they are in communication
 756 with him. But these claims are met with ex-
 769 pressions of disbelief by the people. Almost
 everyone is convinced not only that the curers
 do not now talk with the ancestors, but that
 the ancestors no longer look over them from
 the watchout ... side their cave.

756 The loss of control by the curers is drama-
 178 tized in the long passage quoted above con-
 731 trasting the past and present treatment of
 epidemics. Formerly the two leaders of the
 curers consulted together and announced to
 the president that they had rid the town of
 evil. Now the curers as a group are ordered to
 come before the civil authority. There, in a
 [273] long examination called *ʔiz yoʔtan*—"taking
 the heart"—in which 18 liters of liquor are
 consumed, the assembled curers and civil
 authorities decide who among them is re-
 sponsible for bringing in the witchcraft that is
 causing the epidemic. Later in the evening,
 [682] one of the curers is usually killed (cases 11 and
 29, Table 1).

756 (2) *Conflict between the curers and the civil*
 578 *authority.* The competition between the curers
 and the civil authority can be traced in a series
 of incidents beginning in the '30's and cul-
 minating in an open confrontation in the
 spring of 1966.

756 The first incident occurred in 1932, when
 578 the town was still part of the neighboring
 682 Ladino township:

• 756 I went and asked permission of the authorities to
 578 kill his enemy, a curer, who he thought was be-
 682 witching his brother-in-law. The president went
 683 to the house of the suspected witch with the
 [632] order to imprison him. He said they were going to
 take him to the neighboring township center to
 put him in jail. The group of authorities set off
 with the suspected witch. On the way, another
 group met them and asked them where they were
 going. The president replied, "To H." The group
 that had encountered them asked if they would
 like a drink to heat their body. They gave one
 cup, and then another. Then they cut up the sus-
 pected witch with a machete and put his body in
 the cave of the ancestors. When the widow en-
 quired the next day where her husband was, the
 president said that the man must have gone to
 the finca.

The ambush by the killers was prearranged in
 the town court, and the president covered
 their deed when questions were asked.

[622] In 1940, the leading curer of the lower sec-
 tion was president. When he killed a man who

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accused him of being a witch, he was put in the local jail by the judge and then removed to the departmental capital. During his term of imprisonment an epidemic broke out in the town; it was attributed to witchcraft supposedly practiced by him and by two other curers who remained in town. These two were then imprisoned. After they were set free, all three men were killed in different episodes involving accusations of witchcraft. Permission to act as executioners was granted by the civil authority.

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In the past, the public review of a case before a killing probably served to minimize homicide, since permission was not always granted. Since 1953, when a large highway first linked the town to the departmental capital and communication between this center of justice and the local township increased, the civil authority has not given permission, and prior review of witchcraft cases occurs only with epidemics.

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The final incident in which the civil authority confronted the curers occurred in the spring of 1966. The president accused one of the curers of cutting short his life by lighting candles in the mountains. The curers were called together to hear the threat and to go to the hill to look at the evidence. The accused curer remained at home pleading that he was sick. He was warned not to pursue his witchcraft, and as yet there has been no use of violence on either side. This open confrontation without the use of violence may indicate a change in the strategy of conflict with the growing power of the president.

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(3) *Breakdown of the dual division.* The loss of internal controls in the curing profession and the conflict for power and control by the civil officials and the curers are related to a more fundamental change in the social structure of the community. Formerly the division of the town into two sections provided a channel for opposition as well as cooperation. Recruitment into leadership positions in both the civil hierarchy and the curing hierarchy was based upon residence. The system provided checks and balances in the exercise of power, for the two principales—one from each section of the dual division—were supposed to act as watchdogs over the curers. The shift in the locus of social control from the principales to the president has been marked by the open confrontation with the curers.

000 The authority of the president, however,

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682 wider ranges of expression than are usually
183 permitted in the community prompt men to
assert the strength of their swayohel, to run
races with the animal spirits of others in the
assertion of pre-eminence, to boast of their
material goods, and to "wake up dead."

682 The increasing rate of homicide is related to
674 the following changes in the community:
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(1) Increasing friction resulting both from the
introduction of new economic enterprises
and from political competition by the
recently settled land-reform colonies has
introduced a new kind of homicide, in
which an opponent is killed either by the
person whose interests are threatened or
by hired killers. It has also stimulated
accusations of witchcraft stemming from
envy.

(2) The curers' loss of leadership and of control
over entry into the curing profession
has led to competition among them and to
a loss of respect for their ability to overcome
witchcraft. Curers have become the
most frequent suspects of being witches.

(3) Loss of faith in the guardian ancestors and
in the guardianship functions acquired
from them by the curers has further undermined
the position of the curers as agents
of social control. This has aggravated the
sense of insecurity and fear, which provokes
the uncontrolled use of individual violence.

(4) The shift of power from the principales to
the town president has led to a breakdown
in the system of checks and balances
exerted by the principales over the curers,
and to a direct confrontation of the curers
by civil officials.

(5) In the confrontations of the civil authorities
and the curers in the '40's and early
'50's, the fact that a witchcraft case was
officially reviewed and the killing of the
witch sanctioned may have served as a
brake on the number of such homicides.
Since 1953, when this practice was abandoned,
those who have felt themselves or their families
to be the victims of witchcraft have been left
to their own recourse.

The organizational changes summarized
here are provoked by structural changes
affecting recruitment into the positions of
power and the validation of leadership in the
exercise of power. The dual division of the
town provided an accepted basis for recruiting

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[539] an authority. One example of a reprimand is found in the texts:

K'UXIX YU*N HA* MA*K STAIX *AWO*TAN HAL TRAWI, AKUT.

"It's hurting you now, the aguardiente doesn't agree with you," I told him.

*ILA *E HIC PE YU*N YA TO SK'AN HONA XCI, *A SKUT.

"Yes, but my heart still wants more," he said. "All right," I said.

LA LOK' XAN K'AEL.

Then he went out again.

BALOTA *UTEL YU*N TATA* I.

His father reprimanded him.

LOK' XAN K'AL Z'IN.

He went out again afterward.

While the reprimand administered here had no immediate effect on the son's behavior, it was probably repeated when he was sober and was surely a factor in his subsequent avoidance of drinking settings.

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[606] A father may reprimand a son. A wife, if she has a good relationship with her father-in-law, can have her husband reprimanded by his father. When these measures fail (as in the case of a son who struck his father in response to a reprimand), or when the jeopardized party is not in a position of authority over the offender, resort to the community court is an alternative strategy by which a restitutive outcome may be obtained.

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683 In cases of drunken fighting which results in injury, the

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683 court usually demands a nominal fine (10 pesos--about a day's wages--being the customary amount), and sometimes the defendant will apologize as well. In one such case, the plaintiff had to have hospital care, and the defendant was ordered to pay the bill (30 pesos) instead of a fine. Where the fighting ended in 273*
682 a death, both fine and damages are charged, as in the murder
[539] case already mentioned in text above:

M. PERO ME LAHMAN YAK' TAK' IN TOHUBEN.

I wonder how much money it was settled for.

J. KINYENTOS PESO LAH YAK' HIL.

He handed over five hundred pesos.

M. ME HA* LAH SMUK Z' IN TE MAC'A CAM E.

Did he pay for the funeral of the dead man?

J. PUES MA HNA*TIK, MA YU*N LAH YA*BE SIYERO TRESYENTOS PESO.

Well, I don't know, maybe he gave him something like three hundred pesos.

M. APARTE XAN Z' IN TE KINYENTO LAH YAK' HIL E.

Apart from the five hundred that he handed over?

J. APARTE Z' IN *EHK HATE KINYENTOS PE E LAH YAK' HIL TA KABILTA.

Apart from the five hundred pesos that he handed over to the court.

682
629 It is important that in this case, the murderer not only paid the fine and damages (through his wife) but also found it advisable to leave the community. Murder and witchcraft do not

756 Andrea told them to go and eat the mulberries and she would see what
159 kind of an animal it was. The animal said, "Come here." But when they
562 got there, there was no animal.

In two or four days, people asked them, "What kind of an animal did you see?"

"It was a dog that we saw. Not a real dog, but the soul of the dead Fernanda. Andrea caught it," the girls said.

"Did you truly see where it was?" the people asked.

"I caught it," said Andrea.

"Why did you catch it," the girls asked.

"I caught it because it is a pity it died. Since there is no one to take it, I grabbed it because it made me sad that she [Fernanda] died."

Now Andrea is a me? u?ul [woman curer]. She fights sickness because she has this extra soul.

756 Ordinarily, soul-catching is dangerous since it is seizure of power which has not been granted at birth by the me?iltatil. Andrea, however, has never been accused of doing harm, and people emphasize that she did it out of sympathy for her dead kinswoman.

756 There is some sentiment that curers should not enter too young into the
578 curing profession. If they do, they should be extremely deferential to the elder curers, and not claim greater powers. The informant quoted above
(754) concerning the initiation of her husband into the curing profession maintains that the older curers did not support her husband when he was accused as a witch because of jealousy of his youth.

159 My husband was very young when he entered curing. He had gone to
756 cure in the house of a man living near Domingo [his enemy]. Domingo
578 saw him come out drunk. He had a companion, Lorenzo. About eight
683 people gathered. They put a nail in his jaws. He lived three nights. He told me who did it. I went to the cabildo with my father. They got many witnesses to deny they had been near. It was during the fiesta of Carnival.

My father and I spoke with the authorities in Las Casas. But nothing was done. I did not know how to speak well in Spanish; I went and spoke to Domingo. He told me, "It was your husband's own fault."

"What crime did he have?" I asked.

Curing and Curers

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"He looked for trouble!" Domingo replied.

I said, "You killed my husband!"

He said, "It was not I! It was not I!"

It doesn't serve to enter curing early. People will kill you right away. Another young man wanted to enter. The curers did not permit him since they said he was a witch. People heard he was a witch, and they killed him. He was the same age as my husband [about twenty-seven].

The curers who have survived to an old age were introduced into the profession by an elder relative. They choose their clients carefully, refusing to cure a man who is on the point of death, and remaining within their own section of the dual division. These rules of survival are ignored by some of the younger men who wish to impress their elders with their powers.

The changing image of the curers. The curers of today are unfavorably compared with those of the past who used their power for good. The prototype of the old curer was the fearful Tatik Ca'uk, Lord of the Lightning, possibly a local manifestation of the Maya god Chac.² The dialectic of power is exemplified in his control over beneficial and destructive forces. His beneficence is demonstrated in his ability to bring rain to crops, while his vengeance is revealed in lightning bolts which can kill people and destroy houses. Anyone who is struck by lightning is believed to have had some sin for which the Tatik Ca'uk has punished him. His destructive force is equated with a rifle—called "the elder brother of the Lord of Lightning"—and with the "heat" which brings death in illnesses. His habitation is believed to be the Cave of the Star where the heat which causes epidemics is found.

The curers were intermediaries for the Tatik Ca'uk in their control over both destructive and beneficial forces. Formerly, the swayohel of the curers patrolled the streets of the town to prevent the entry of evildoers bringing heat. It is in this role that they are referred to as me'ltatil. If an epidemic occurred, the two leading curers from each side of the town con-

2. In other Tzeltal- and Tzotzil-speaking communities, the god Ca'uk is named as the chief figure from pre-Conquest theology (Hermitte 1964, Holland 1963:93).

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621 tural opposition between the two sides of the dual division. In this case,
528 resolution came with the intercession of federal troops.

[548] When curing was a controlled profession, with a hierarchy legitimizing
756 entry and exit, the power of the curers was directed toward guarding the
178 village against evil as well as curing. In the 1940s, the loss of one leader by
death and the other's jail sentence meant loss of control over entry into
the profession. A growing suspicion and discontent with the curers as a
[754] group, laying upon them the responsibility of much of the witchcraft, is
reflected in the account of another older informant:

*Formerly when the curers J. C., A. A., S. K., and J. D. were alive, they
walked in common. The people were in accord with the curers because
they watched over the pueblo. They knew about medicine, and so people
of Alannantik went to ask them favors to cure them and also the people
of Ahk'olnantik went to ask them favors.*

*But then, after they died [about 1940], the principales did not dare fight
the curers because they had animal spirits, and the principales themselves
didn't—they were just honorable people.*

621 The doubt about the civil authority's control over the curers has in-
756 creased since young leaders have taken the leadership in the town. One in-
178 formant said, "When there are young people in the cabildo, they can't
keep control of the curers, but the old people in the cabildo can." With the
relaxation of restrictions on entry into the curing profession, following the
loss of leadership and the ranked hierarchy, curers were no longer re-

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[54] strained by professional standards. When drunk, they bragged of their
power to do evil as well as to do good. The first killing of a curer accused
• 623 of being a witch occurred in 1937. He was working in Pinola when he
621 was shot. The dead curer's widow wanted to bring his body back to be
[178] buried in the town cemetery, but the request was refused by the judges.
This suggests that the town authorities agreed with the accusation, since it
is the custom to return the dead to the town for burial. Other assassina-
tions by individuals occurred in 1943 and in 1950. During this period, the
civil officials sanctioned the assassinations of persons accused and convicted
of witchcraft. When someone wished to kill a man suspected of witch-
craft, they would go to the town hall and ask for permission. After a re-

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view of the case by the judges and the other civil authorities, the president would have the suspected witch locked up in the local jail and then give the key to his enemy. The following story illustrates this procedure:

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When we were still part of the township of Teopisca [sometime before 1931] F. went and asked permission of the authorities to kill his enemy, a curer, whom he thought was bewitching his brother-in-law. The president arrived at the house of the suspected witch with the order to imprison him. He said that they were going to Teopisca to put him in jail. The group of authorities set off with the suspected witch. On the way another group met them and asked them where they were going. The President replied, "To Teopisca." The group which had encountered them asked them if they would like a drink to "heat their body." They gave one cup and then another. They then cut up the suspected witch with a machete and put his body in the cave of me?tik?atik that goes to Chiapa de Corzo. When the widow enquired the next day where her husband was, the president said that the man must have gone to the finca.

After telling this story, my informant concluded, "Therefore, little by little, the pueblo is getting better because we scared the curers with the permission of the president to kill them." He felt that this was the point at which the power of the curers, who were more and more frequently being accused as witches, was broken.

[829]

While the usual course of action, once a man was accused of witchcraft, was to kill him so that there would be no danger of revenge, the following case illustrates punishment by beating.

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The time was 1935. There was a very bad curer who stole much cattle. One man who heard that he had stolen his cattle wanted to kill him, but the curer met the man and killed him in an old house. The town authorities seized the curer and forced him to pay one thousand pesos for the bull. The principales punished him by tying him to a tree and beating him five or six times. They beat him well for the town. After they beat him they brought him to prison in San Cristóbal and gave him over to the Ministerio Publico to arrange the case. He did not return to the pueblo but went to another place. In five years he returned to his pueblo.

756 When he arrived here, he did not hear any word that they would kill
627 him. He persisted in his custom of stealing. And the pueblo seized him
and put him in prison. The whole town seized him although he had
heard no word.

They tied him to a tree and said to him, "You do not have shame. You
are a curer, father of the pueblo, [respect term for curer], and yet you be-
haved badly and truly stole. The town sees you are a bad man, Emilio.
They call you their father, but now I am going to tell you that you ought
not to be called father. You're a bad one."

He wanted to be called father, but he was only a bad one. He returned
again to San Cristóbal because of two crimes. He did not hear the words.
He remained in prison, and when he came out someone else came and
killed him.

756 Since 1938, nine of the thirty-seven homicide cases on which I collected
682 data (Table 29) were killings of curers. The increasing frequency of such
178 killings reveals the loss of faith in the guardianship role of the curers, but
along with this, retention of belief in their power to work evil.

731 In the series of successful confrontations, the civil authority has gained
756 strength and overcome some of the fear of the people. In May 1964, during
754 a severe contagion of measles, a rumor started that the disease was being
627 spread because of witchcraft. The president called together the curers. The
621 consensus of this gathering was that a certain curer of Alannantik had
buried the "heat" which was causing the deaths in the milpa of his enemy.
The people of Alannantik gathered with the curers and the civil officials
in the milpa of the "enemy" to dig it out. The curers dug out a charcoal
brazier which is the sign of illness and threw it in the Cave of the Star.

• [683] That evening the suspected witch was killed, presumably by his neighbors.

756 In the most recent confrontation between the civil authorities and an in-
621 dividual curer, in March 1966, the civil authorities showed a united front
627 in denouncing the use of witchcraft to threaten any official. The entire
754 group of practicing curers from both sides of the dual division were called
to witness the denunciation before the assembled civil officials in the town
hall. The only one absent was the curer accused of attempting to cut short
the life of the president because of envy of his position. The assembled

[TEXT CONTINUED ON PAGE 248]

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4. In a series of confrontations, the civil officials have challenged the social control functions of the curers. Witch-killings in which many of the victims have been curers have minimized but not overcome the power of these men. [1756]

5. The priest has succeeded in establishing control over the church, [1793] but the Indians may yet succeed in deposing him, a plan they were putting into effect when I left town.

The Indians are now aware of their rights to limit—or eliminate if necessary—the self-appointed caciques. The new cacique promotes the community welfare not only in his rhetoric but in the services he performs for the officials. His involvement in political affairs is tolerated, not encouraged, and the officials are ready to turn to alternative sources of aid in their activities. 641
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The involvement of the PRI in local elections has not introduced a new center of power in the political arena. Political factions are based on economic interests contained within the town, and the autonomy of the town has in no way been affected by leadership from party headquarters in the state capitol. The community and the party use each other for their own ends in almost complete ignorance of what is occurring in the domain of the other. 665
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The system of beliefs and understandings has changed along with these organizational changes. The most significant change has been the waning belief in the guardianship of the ancestors. The absence of the curers at the fiesta of the caves means that they no longer have this ritual occasion to validate their claims by communicating with the ancestors. The loss of leadership and of a hierarchy of prestige within the ranks of curers has removed internal controls over the profession and further undermined their position. The diminishing respect with which they are treated in the town hall and the increasing number of murders of curers accused of witchcraft is directly related to the loss of belief in their power as guardians. Since they were not an integral part of the civil-religious hierarchy, as the curers were in Oxchuk (Villa Rojas 1947), this has not upset the hierarchy, but it has changed the balance of power in the wider community. 769
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The diminishing significance of the leadership of the principales is tied 683 •

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576 support of whatever is said—repeating the final phrase of the person con-
 [535] versing or injecting supportive statements such as “indeed, indeed,” or “so
 it is.” In the dance of the alferoces’ wives, for example, women were the
 model of deference, moving in a self-contained pattern before the assem-
 bled guests, with slow, tiny steps, eyes downcast, a shawl covering their
 heads on which they wore their husbands’ ceremonial hats.

621 Through recruitment procedures, alternation and linkage in official
 182 roles, and leadership validated by age and service in lower positions—prin-
 ciples applying to role relations in all institutions—Tzo’ontahal has re-
 mained an integrated community. There is a high degree of stereotyping
 in behavior from one institution to another, and norms of behavior are the
 [682] same for public as for private roles. However, a remarkably high homicide
 [578] rate and open conflict in all of the institutional settings indicate basic
 sources of disruption.

682 Since 1960 the rate of homicide in town has increased from an average
 593 of 1 every 2 years to an average of 5 or 6 per year. Table 29 indicates the
 609 role relationships of killer to victim in 37 of over 70 homicides occurring
 428 between 1937 and 1964. The highest incidence of homicide (7 cases) oc-
 578 curred between brothers and brothers-in-law. Male siblings comprise the
 closest cooperating group. Brothers work together in the milpa until the
 father dies or divides his property among his children during his lifetime.
 Bilateral inheritance with equal division of land and houses among female
 as well as male offspring means that brothers-in-law are potential competi-
 tors for the same limited resources. Friction arising among brothers and
 brothers-in-law does not come from the principle of equal inheritance, but
 rather because of the fact of differing responsibilities and expenses within
 the family. For example, the child who has remained with the parents and
 [688] thus assumes the burden of care for them in their declining years often
 feels that he should inherit a greater share. The disputes arise in the deci-
 sions concerning how much this disadvantage should be weighted. The
 suppression of overt competition may in part explain the homicidal acts.

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 • 683 Although the tensions in fact stem from suppressed economic competition,
 [154] they are translated into witchcraft accusations as soon as anyone in the
 [626] family becomes ill. Violence against a witch is condoned by the commu-
 nity and provides a channel for latent hostility. Once the accusation has

$\frac{1}{A}$ (see pp.245-247..Analyst)

Roles, Persons, and Performance

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been made, there is no recourse but to kill the man since he may retaliate by killing his accuser (this occurred in two of the cases noted in Table 29).

Conflict between generations in the role sets father/son and father/son-in-law stems from delay in carrying out role responsibilities. Fathers are expected to provide the money for the costs of betrothal, and to give their children shares of the patrimony including both land and livestock. The scheduling of when this should occur is often a matter of dispute, resulting in at least two cases of homicide in the period analyzed.

New economic enterprises have exacerbated the tensions rising from envy. Foster (1965) has suggested that envy stems from the notion of the "limited good," requiring the strategy of a "zero sum game" (Bennet 1966). The fact that the new wealth is evidence of new opportunities, not a subtraction from a given resource supply, has not entered the cognitive awareness of the people. The prospering leaders of these enterprises feel themselves to be particularly vulnerable to the envy of others and thus to the charge of witchcraft. There have been several open attacks on new leaders accused as witches; the leader of the truck cooperative, for example, was murdered in 1966. Six men have been killed as cattle thieves in the past ten years.

The economic roles created with the introduction of new enterprises have not been integrated in the traditional pattern of recruitment and control. In the association of cattle breeders, leadership tends to be based on the size of the herd; in the case of the truck cooperative, amount of capital invested and entrepreneurial skills have determined the leadership of the enterprise, while driving skill and ability to get along in the Ladino world has been the basis for choice of drivers. Such achievement principles as the basis for recruitment into these envied positions are not accepted in the same way that age and passage through a hierarchy of posts validated higher positions in the old hierarchies. The conspicuous expenditure of wealth in the more expensive posts in the religious hierarchy has also failed to lessen hostility aroused by the increasing disparity in wealth, and in fact those who have served as *alférez* have been even more subject to witchcraft aroused by envy.

Roles, Persons, and Performance

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The following list of moral transgressions is roughly ordered in terms of the egregiousness of the crime: witchcraft, theft of cattle, theft of corn, "talking with" a woman (this is a euphemism for having an affair), having more than one wife, killing, and disrespect to parents. There is a fair amount of consistency in the rank order given by different informants. Of five people questioned, all ranked witchcraft first, and theft, without qualification as to what was stolen, second. Subjects questioned differentiated the crime of "talking with" a woman according to the status of the woman—it was worse to have relations with a married woman than with an unmarried girl or with a widow. Killing was listed late or not at all by some because it is assumed that the killer has cause unless the contrary is proved. The dead man is referred to as the guilty one. It is considered worse to kill a consanguineous relative than an affinal relative or a nonrelative. One man remarking on an incident in which a person lost his bull said: "It was a punishment of God for killing his father. If it had been his stepfather, it would be different." Wanton killing is said to be absent in the pueblo, and something that the kurik of the colonias do. The three murders in the past ten years resulting from barroom brawls between "friends" have not dispelled this notion.

Disrespect shown to parents is considered a serious violation of morality. A boy who refuses to listen to his father cannot expect to receive the protection and support of his parents, usually offered a child throughout their lifetime, or of the community. If the son abuses his father verbally or physically in public, the father is supported in whatever action he takes. One father, whose son kicked him in one of the local bars, drew applause when he made the sign of the cross in two deep gashes with his machete on his son's forehead. To beat one's father or mother is a great sin, but to beat one's wife is tolerated, particularly if it is done in drunkenness. If a man other than the husband beats a woman for any cause, she may reciprocate by beating him in court "before the eyes of the judges." One woman who was awarded this privilege when her husband's brother beat her said, "If he were my own husband, it would be all right for him to beat me."

The good man is "of one heart" and reveals it by his humility ("very soft heart"). The rules for demonstrating this are given by an old man who is frequently asked to be a nakawane in his section of the dual divi-